



Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes.

by

of

to

in

on

1. We're just going to play it ____ ear.
2. This is just the tip ____ the iceberg.
3. let's put that decision ____ the back burner for now.
4. I'm ____ two minds about spending all that money at once.
5. He stuck ____ his guns in spite of their grumbling.
6. We'll cross that bridge when we come ____ it.

Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1-6 with A-F to make complete sentences.

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|---|---|
| 1. The bottom line is simply | A. and cut straight to the chase. |
| 2. We're going to play it by ear | B. but let's not make a mountain out of a molehill. |
| 3. You will have to stop sitting on the fence | C. but I won't split hairs. |
| 4. The answer should have a capital letter | D. and see how the next 24 hours go. |
| 5. Let's skip the introductions | E. that business is about money. |
| 6. We can't ignore this issue | F. and show where your loyalty lies. |

Exercise 3

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

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1. 'They really believe in what I do and they want to enable me to do it.' She went on to explain her success: 'I'm very good, that's ____.'
- a) the bottom line b) the tip of the iceberg c) the back burner



2. Then he became really ill and had to put all his plans _____.
a) up in the air b) on the fence c) on the back burner
3. 'What if you need another operation after this one?' – I'll _____.
a) make a mountain out of a molehill b) cross that bridge when I come to it c) stick to my guns
4. The President accused his critics of being oversensitive and of _____.
a) playing it by ear b) cutting to the chase c) making a mountain out of a molehill
5. For four hours of questioning, Grommek _____, but by five o'clock he had changed his story.
a) played it by ear b) cut to the chase c) stuck to his guns
6. She was _____ about whether or not to turn back.
a) splitting hairs b) in two minds c) up in the air

Exercise 4

Correct the idioms in these sentences.

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1. The dates for the summit meeting are still **up on the fence** at the moment.
2. The police say that these numbers could just be the **top of the iceberg**.
3. He'll do what he can to make you change your mind, but you **stick on the back burner**.
4. I don't want to retire when I'm sixty years old but I'll **cut to the bridge** when I come to it.
5. She forgot her notes so she had to **play it by air** at the interview.
6. There just isn't any more money and that **sits on the bottom line**.
7. After he retires, Ken will be able to **sit in the back seat** in the family business.
8. I was proud to work for Ferrari, and to drive their fantastic cars was **the icing in the cake**.

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Exercise 5

Complete the sentences with idioms in this unit, changing the verb forms if necessary.

1. I was so pleased just to have passed the exam; coming first was _____.
2. I can't really say too much about who else I'm going to be working with at the moment because it's all very much _____ and anything could happen.
3. I never really had a plan for my life. I just _____. Neither of us is very ambitious and we have enough money.
4. She introduced herself and then said 'I'll _____: I have all the evidence I need to put you in prison for the next ten years.'
5. This is a misleading figure. There will be many hidden costs that we will discover as this project develops. I suggest that £1.4 billion is only _____.
6. Yet on this key issue, the government has chosen to _____, saying that schools must decide for themselves.

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. by
2. of
3. on
4. in
5. to
6. to

Exercise 2

1. E
2. D
3. F
4. C
5. A
6. B

Exercise 3

1. the bottom line
2. on the back burner
3. cross that bridge when I come to it
4. making a mountain out of a molehill
5. stuck to his guns
6. in two minds

Exercise 4

1. up in the air
2. tip of the iceberg
3. stick to your guns
4. cross that bridge
5. play it by ear
6. is the bottom line
7. sit on a back seat
8. the icing on the cake

Exercise 5

1. the icing on the cake
2. up in the air
3. play it by ear
4. cut to the chase
5. the tip of the iceberg
6. sit on the fence